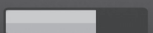


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ISBN 978-0-545-42766-1

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 16 17 19 20

Printed in the U.S.A. 40
First printing 2016

Book design by Jeannine Riske

"On the Internet, you live forever. Everything you read could have happened today. Or last year. Or never."

—Torrey Grey, *Beautystarz15*

CHAPTER ONE

BEAT THE BLUES AND LEARN FRESH BEAUTY TIPS

In September, my parents moved me and my dead sister to Texas.

Today, just one week after the moving trucks left us here, my parents are going to put her ashes in the ground out in the middle of nowhere. The thought of it makes my stomach churn.

"Are you sure you don't want to come with us, Torrey?" my dad asks as he paces back and forth in front of the couch. My mom stares off into space, her hands clenched in her lap.

"I'm sure," I say. "I went to the funeral." And we all knew how that turned out. Pictures of my grieving face ended up on Instagrams everywhere. There was talk that a camera was even hidden in the huge spray of pink roses. They never found out for sure.

Mom seems to want to argue with me, and then just doesn't have the energy. Like she doesn't have the energy to eat dinner or brush out the tangles in her curly blond hair. She did, however, have the strength to keep going down to

that corner at Pearl and 10th Street back in Colorado. My dad found her there, night after night, staring at that little pile of wilting flowers and teddy bears and holding handwritten cards from strangers.

“We all need a new start,” my dad says now, looking at my mom. I know that part is about me, too. I can’t really blame him. He’s trying to fix things. That’s what Dad does. That’s why we’re here in Texas, sitting on a couch the color of dead leaves and talking about putting what’s left of my sister in the dirt.

Right after the funeral in Colorado, my parents discussed the move to Texas. Well, the truth is, my dad talked about it and my mom just stared at things like forks and lamps. I tried to not get in the way, and didn’t say anything at all, even though the thought of moving away from Boulder was another thin layer of sadness pushed down on top of all the grief.

“It’s just for a little while,” Dad said. Like we’d come back again after a few months.

When my mother finally agreed to go, there was only one condition.

My sister, Miranda.

My dad, ever the planner, already thought of this and had an answer ready. “My family has a cemetery plot down in Huntsville. We can put her there and be close by.”

The next day, Mom carefully rolled up the silver vase containing my sister’s ashes into bubble wrap and placed it in a specially made travel box the funeral people gave us.

And just like that, even though it didn't make any sense to me, we all went to Texas. I didn't speak up because I didn't deserve to have an opinion.

I never knew you could bury ashes when people died. I thought you were supposed to keep them on the mantel or sprinkle them across the ocean. That's what they always did in the movies.

"There won't be anyone else there today. Right, Scott?" my mom asks my dad now in a quiet monotone. She talks like that a lot now. No one would guess she lectured to hundreds of biology students at the university in Colorado. She quit when Miranda was born and went back to teaching part-time when my sister went to kindergarten. Even so, she still had a wait list every semester of students wanting to get into her section. She was that good.

My dad nods and adds, "Just us and the funeral home people."

I can't give them the answer I know they want to hear. "I'm not going," I say again.

"It's okay." My dad stops still and looks down at my mom and me, huddled together on the couch. "You don't have to."

My relief is followed quickly by guilt. I bite my lower lip, holding back any chance of changing my mind. I can hear the disappointment in his voice, but it just seeps down and blends into all the other sadness until it is indistinguishable.

He sighs. "If you want to shut it all out, Torrey, that's your choice."

"Nothing is my choice anymore," I mumble, but I know he hears it by the way his jaw clenches.

"She can't stay here alone." My mom's voice is starting to rise.

My dad glances over at her, frowns. "She won't be by herself. Uncle Leo and Aunt Kim are coming over. They said they'd keep her company." My dad knew all along I wasn't going. He planned for it. I'm sixteen years old and need a babysitter. Even worse, the babysitters are some hick-a-billy relatives I've only met once, when I was eight. Great. But there's no sense in arguing. Not today.

"You're sure?" My mom's liquid blue eyes are pleading, but I'm not giving in. She can just add it to the long list of all my other failings and shortcomings.

"Yes," I say, firmly. It feels like I'll drown if I don't break away. I stand up. Her fingers cling to me, dropping off my shoulder only when I step out of their reach, but I know it's not me she really wants.

Later, I wave good-bye from the front door with a fake smile plastered on my face. I glance around to see if anyone's watching. Out of habit, I guess.

I go back inside, closing the door behind me and turning the lock. I don't know why I bother, because minutes after my parents drive off, I hear my uncle and aunt coming in the unlocked back door.

"Anybody home?" my uncle calls out.

"In here," I answer, and hope they stay in the kitchen, far away from me. Powering up my laptop, I sit down by the

window in the big leather chair that looks just as old and shabby as the rest of this rental house. We don't have an Internet connection yet, so I make do with the only spot where I can catch the neighbors' unprotected wireless signal.

I lurk on Facebook first, scanning the postings and photos. I still have an account even though I haven't posted or commented since August.

Cody Davis and Zoe Williams are now friends.

Cody Davis wrote on Zoe Williams's wall. *Are you going to the party on Friday night?*

Cody Davis commented on Zoe Williams's photo. *Looking good.*

There's one photo that catches my attention, but I don't "like" it. It's a great picture of Zoe, but then she always looks good for the camera. The bright pink furry hat is the perfect complement to her olive complexion and her straight white smile. There is no sign of that horrible overbite she had until sixth grade. Kids called her "rabbit face" until I punched them hard in the arm and they stopped. In the Facebook photo, she's waving from a wooden bridge. Looks like Vail in the background. When Mrs. Timbley asked me in the seventh grade what I wanted to be when I grew up and I said "famous," everybody but Zoe laughed. She knew I was serious and had been my best friend and favorite accessory ever since.

There is another new picture posted and I definitely don't like this one. In this photo, Zoe's wearing a purple lace sheath

dress and black pumps. The tall blond boy in the picture has his arm draped around her shoulders. His smile is crooked with the right side just a little higher than the left and, even though I can't see them in the picture, I know there are tiny little crinkles around his blue eyes. He's wearing a suit. I'm more used to seeing him in jeans and hiking boots, or maybe his lacrosse uniform. I've only seen him dressed in a suit once before. At my sister's funeral.

Cody Davis is in a relationship with Zoe Williams.

Boom. There it is. Curling my fingers into my palm, I dig my nails into the soft skin. Life is going on without me. As though I never existed.

Hurriedly, I click over to YouTube and log on to my video channel. I feel the now familiar rush at the still of my face on the screen, and I study my well-known username: Beautystarz15. My adrenaline spikes when I see the subscriber count. Three hundred thousand of my closest Internet friends all waiting anxiously for my next post.

They'll have to wait a little longer.

I select the most popular video, already viewed more than a hundred thousand times. In it, Zoe and I are sitting on my bed in my pink-walled room, surrounded by Forever 21 and Anthropologie bags. I'm wearing the Dior sunglasses I picked out that day from a clearance rack, and my dark, thick hair is perfectly straight-ironed.

Zoe says it's my blue eyes combined with the dark hair that really makes my face pop on screen. She's probably right, but I figure I look like the popular girls at any high

school. Tall, but not too tall. Thin, but not too skinny. I think that's why the vlog gets so many hits — I'm approachable. Like a new best friend who tells you what to wear and how to look good wearing it.

"After all, everyone deserves to see the fruits of our shopping trips and not have to ask where we bought stuff," Zoe had said that day, but only to me, because we weren't filming yet. "It's really a win-win."

"You're a snob," I told her. "That's exactly the kind of attitude that comes across on-screen. You have to be *likable*."

"You're one to talk," Zoe said, grinning at me, and then added, "you just hide it better than I do."

But none of the thousands of people who viewed this clip will ever know about that conversation. It took place before I hit RECORD on my laptop. They only see what's here.

I wait while the clip slowly loads. My face is frozen on the screen, then I come to life. Zoe is by my side and looking at me, just like we practiced a million times.

"So normally I would say floral jeans are going to make you look huge," I say, tilting my head slightly toward the left for the better angle. "But these skinny jeans by Free People I bought today at Nordstrom are perfect to make long legs look even longer."

I set down the jeans, and then pick up a purple jacket off the bed and hold it out toward the camera. "And if you really want to turn some heads, rock this fun faux fur with those jeans."